

# Learning Experience Framework for Marian University

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At the core of a Marian University student's college experience is what happens in the classroom whether these classrooms are online, in Marian Hall, in the community, in clinical settings, on the athletic field, on a bus to Alabama, or across the English countryside. It is in the classroom that ideas are born, beliefs challenged, and lives changed. For Marian to develop students who can have a transformational influence in their community, we need to be intentional in the development of the learning experiences students encounter

The core of our work is the Franciscan Values upon which the university is established. As indicated in our Strategic Plan, this part of our identity should be "evident in our graduates." For this to occur, we need to provide our students the opportunity to live out the Values through course assignments and activities, where appropriate. We also need to model the Values and incorporate them into all aspects of our classrooms and our interactions with students. To develop students who can have a transformational impact on their community, we must move beyond foundational expectations to develop well-designed courses which yield intentionally impactful, inclusive, and integrated learning experiences as described below.



## Inclusive

For learning to occur, students must feel valued and included within the classroom. When students feel included, they express ideas, they ask questions and they feel comfortable to be who they are. Studies show that a feeling of safety, inclusion, and a sense of belonging contributes to successful learning, memory, and higher-order thinking. Other studies show that a sense of belonging and positive relationships with instructors positively impacts persistence and academic success.

Inclusive classrooms are becoming increasingly vital, as more diversity is present within our student body. Some diversity may be visible (e.g. race, gender expression, physical ability. etc.). Other forms of diversity are not visible (e.g. learning differences, sexual orientation, trauma survival, socioeconomic status, etc.). The fact is we will never be fully cognizant of all the differences and related needs of the students in our classrooms. Therefore, we need to be intentionally inclusive with the presentation of content, assignments, and our interactions with students.

Developing inclusive classrooms expands the design of our classes to integrate evidence-based strategies to enhance the students' learning experience. This means intentionally communicating the alignment between objectives and course work, developing transparent, high-impact assignments, providing meaningful content to engage the student, and including practice and feedback to check understanding and allow for mastery building.

Creating inclusive classrooms also means honest self-reflection about one's own beliefs, privileges, and misconceptions. It means seeing the impact of our words and actions from another's point of view and being willing to respect different perspectives even though we may not agree or understand.

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It is our responsibility to welcome all students into the learning environment and to encourage and support their learning. This will mean exploring new ways to manage classrooms, incorporating strategies that reach a variety of students, and developing our own awareness and responses to our biases and beliefs. The relationships we build with all our students is core to a successful Marian learning experience.

## Application of Inclusivity

Areas of Application	Strategies	Resources
Instructional Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think-pair-share</li> <li>• Peer Teaching</li> <li>• Inclusive course policies</li> <li>• Practice and feedback on concepts before assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Think-Pair-Share</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Peer Teaching</a></li> </ul>
Course Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of sources and voices (authors by different gender and races; different formats)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Strategies for Inclusive Teaching (Diverse Content/Materials)</a></li> </ul>
Classroom Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking questions that elicit response</li> <li>• Establish classroom expectations with students to create joint ownership</li> <li>• Discussion that includes multiple perspectives (use roles – starter, wrapper, cheerleader, devil’s advocate, etc.)</li> <li>• Instructor self-reflection into own beliefs and biases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Ideas for Discussions (online and in class)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Implicit Bias and How it Impacts Behavior</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Group Roles</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Awareness of Own Implicit Biases</a></li> </ul>
Assessment of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TILT formatted assignments</li> <li>• Providing choice in content and format of assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">TILT – Transparency in Teaching and Learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn</a></li> </ul>

## Impactful

The purpose of education is to positively impact student learning and development. What we teach students in the classroom should impact their everyday lives, vocation, and future profession. Students should find the learning experience valuable and applicable to their lives. Students should leave our classrooms changed in a positive way, even though they may not realize it at the time. Our goal is to help students make sense of the content available and use it to make informed decisions. We also need to help students understand the significance of our discipline and how it impacts their lives in useful, valuable ways.

This will probably mean times of friction, as we challenge students’ thoughts and beliefs, ask them to stretch to understand and apply new concepts, and become accountable to themselves and others. It most likely means trying and adopting new ways of teaching and assessing learning that changes the focus from the actual content to the application of its use beyond the classroom.

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## Application of Impactful

Areas of Application	Strategies	Resources
Instructional Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Impact Practices</li> <li>• Service Learning / Community-Based Learning</li> <li>• Active Lecturing</li> <li>• Problem-based learning</li> <li>• Case studies of real world problems and issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">High Impact Pedagogical Practices</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Service Learning Checklist</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Making Lectures More Active</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Problem-Based Learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Why &amp; How Cases Promote Learning</a></li> </ul>
Course Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose content that shows relevance of topic to students' lives outside of the class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Small Teaching: Making Connections</a></li> </ul>
Classroom Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as a coach / facilitator not the "sage on the stage"</li> <li>• Challenge students thoughts and beliefs</li> <li>• Explain why activities are being used</li> <li>• Share research on growth mindset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">From 'Sage on the Stage' to 'Guide on the Side' : A Good Start</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Honoring &amp; Challenging Students' Beliefs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Giving Students Assignments they Hate</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Challenging (and Changing) Fixed Mindset in the Classroom</a></li> </ul>
Assessment of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TILT formatted assignments</li> <li>• Providing choice in content and format of assessment</li> <li>• Limit use of objective tests</li> <li>• Concept inventories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">TILT – Transparency in Teaching and Learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Multiple Choice Tests: Pros and Cons</a></li> </ul>

## Integrated

The Marian classroom should not operate in isolation. Instead, it must be fully integrated into all aspects of our student's transformational journey. Learning is at its best when there is integration within and across disciplines, integration with community, integration with co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences, integration of evidence-based instructional practices and methods, and integration into the students' vocation, profession, and own life experiences. As instructors, we need to be intentional as to how we balance the integration of elements to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Learning is most meaningful when students can integrate what they have learned in previous courses to build further understanding of current content, as learning solidifies through retrieval, consolidation, and application to new contexts. Showing integration across disciplines gives students educational breadth and challenges students to look at concepts from various perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach sets the stage for a transformational understanding of the world in which we live.

As instructors, we can continually improve our teaching by investigating and integrating instructional methods vetted through research. This will expand the tools available to us to reach students and engage them in the learning process. Often, new methods can help energize our teaching and keep learning fresh. This will mean allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and open to experimenting realizing we may fail.

Integrating content into assignments that directly relate to students' vocation and profession yields meaningful learning experiences. Whenever possible, assignments should allow students to apply what they have learned to

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solve real-world problems or create meaningful artifacts that have life outside the classroom – portfolios to share in interviews, writing samples for graduate school, items that help the community, etc.

Integration asks us to look beyond our own classes to determine how our content fits within what the student has already learned and the larger context of the students’ community. It means continually asking how we can expand our abilities to engage students through integration of strategies and techniques.

To develop students who can have a transformational impact on the larger community means looking beyond our classroom to the world in which our students live and helping them develop the skills and understanding they need to make the world they touch a better place.

## *Application of Integrated*

Areas of Application	Strategies	Resources
Instructional Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate common readers</li> <li>• Tap into learning from other courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Common Reading &amp; First Year of College</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Helping Students See the Connections</a></li> </ul>
Course Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentionally align course objectives, content, and assignments</li> <li>• Intentionally align content with program outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Creating a Course Map</a></li> </ul>
Classroom Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss how content touches on the Franciscan values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Sample Courses Infused with Franciscan Intellectual Tradition</a></li> </ul>
Assessment of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align Institutional Learning Outcomes with assignments</li> <li>• Integrate assignments into profession / vocation of the students (allow choice)</li> <li>• Create meaningful artifacts that can be used outside of class to show understanding of concepts (lab reports, videos, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">TILT – Transparency in Teaching and Learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn</a></li> </ul>